

### REMARKS

Claims 2-40 have been canceled without prejudice. New claims 41-78 have been added. Consideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

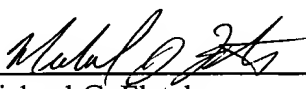
If the Examiner believes that a telephonic interview will help speed this application toward issuance, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the undersigned at (281) 970-4545.

### General Authorization for Extensions of Time

In accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, Applicants hereby provide a general authorization to treat this and any future reply requiring an extension of time as incorporating a request therefor. Furthermore, Applicants authorize the Commissioner to charge the appropriate fee for any extension of time to Deposit Account No. 06-1315; Order No. THOX:0021--1/FLE (PA060-US).

Respectfully submitted,

Date: December 21, 1999

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael G. Fletcher  
Reg. No. 32,777  
FLETCHER, YODER & VAN SOMEREN  
P.O. Box 692289  
Houston, TX 77269-2289  
(281) 970-4545